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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a national survey was conducted of transfer practices at both two- and four-year institutions. The survey was sent for the second time to two-year public and private institutions (n=1,350), and for the first time to four-year institutions (n=1,950). The two-year college response rate was 39% in 1990 and 31% in 1991, while the response rate for four-year institutions was 32%. Transfer practices prevalent in both the 1990 and 1991 two-year college responses were written articulation agreements, transfer counselors, and course equivalency guides. In the 1991 survey, other strategies cited to help students transfer included an articulated core curriculum, guaranteed admissions to four-year institutions, transfer centers, and computerized course transfer information services. In general, four-year institutions relied on fewer academic and student service practices to support the transfer process than their two-year counterparts. The two main practices employed by four-year institutions were transfer counselors/advisors and written articulation agreements. Four-year institutions were far less likely than two-year colleges to involve faculty in academic practices such as two-year/four-year departmental collaboration (30% vs. 49%), two-year/four-year faculty collaboration (18% vs. 36%), and joint degree programs (16% vs 24%). To obtain information about their former students, two-year colleges employed a variety of direct and indirect approaches, including surveys of graduates (72%), feedback from receiving institutions (70%), and reports from in-state four-year institutions (56%). Four-year institutions typically used data from the registrar and other offices (73%) and the number of transcripts received (50%) to obtain information about transfer students. (JMC)

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The American Council on Education's National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer released, in Fall 1991, a major policy statement on the transfer function, *Setting the National Agenda: Academic Achievement and Transfer*. The Policy Statement pointed to the need for two- and four-year colleges and universities to take steps to ensure that qualified students have the opportunity to transfer and complete baccalaureate study. As the Policy Statement indicates, achieving this goal will require institutional commitment to transfer in a variety of ways that affect both academic and student service practices at two- and four-year schools. The National Transfer Center is vitally interested in knowing what two- and four-year institutions are doing to help students transfer. This report describes the results of a 1991 survey of transfer practices.

About the Study

What do we know about colleges and university practices regarding transfer? What academic programs and student support programs do two- and four-year institutions use to help students transfer? These are the important questions for which the National Transfer Center sought answers in the recent survey of transfer practices.

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The national survey was a second look at two-year colleges and a first look at four-year institutions. It included 1,350 institutions identified on the American Council on Education's list of regionally accredited, degree-granting, two-year public and private institutions and 1,950 institutions on the American Council's list of regionally-accredited, degree-granting, four-year public and private institutions. A different survey was mailed to the two- and four-year institutions. The two surveys varied in content to make them compatible with institutional mission. In the two-year survey, 538 institutions responded in 1990 (39 percent) and 423 responded in 1991 (31 percent). In the four-year survey, 630 responded (32 percent).

Implications

Both the 1990 and 1991 surveys indicate that two- and four-year schools rely primarily on student service-based practices in dealing with the transfer function. The use of formal articulation agreements and student service personnel to help students gain access to a transfer institution is good news. On the other hand, these practices focus primarily on entry to a transfer institution but do not address the classroom practices in place at two- and four-year institutions that directly affect student performance after they transfer. Attending to these academic practices is more complex and difficult to change, but is essential to student success at transfer.

With regard to two-year schools, the 1990 and 1991 surveys yield different pictures of faculty-led practices to help in the transfer process. Fewer of these practices were reported in the 1991 survey. This has serious implications for the transfer student's success at the four-year institution. Faculty involvement with transfer issues helps shape the learning experiences of students and set the norms for student performance and success. As outlined in *Setting the National Agenda*, when such practices are thoughtfully negotiated between faculty from two-year and four-year colleges, "...articulation agreements get replaced by educational partnerships that provide students with curricular paths built on identified intellectual and skills competencies rather than on tentative lists of equivalencies". Transfer students become accustomed to one set of academic practices at both institutions and do not encounter the difficulties sometimes associated with moving on to the new academic environment of a four-year institution.

For four-year schools, the rapid growth of the two-year college as the entry point to higher education makes it essential that these institutions take an aggressive role in attracting and retaining students on their campuses. The data from this study show that this is not happening to the extent that may be needed to improve rates of transfer. The institutions rely mainly on student support personnel and written articulation agreements to serve the need. Faculty at many of the institutions responding are not involved with the types of collaborative activities that open the doors for transfer students. Those four-year institutions wanting to increase the number of transfer students will have to pay careful attention to incorporating those practices that will attract and retain transfer students to their campuses.

Responses from the Two-Year Colleges

The 1990 and 1991 surveys present an opportunity to focus on stability and change in transfer practices over a two-year period.

Three transfer practices are quite prevalent in the 1991 survey (and were cited the most frequently in the 1990 survey as well):

- written articulation agreements (90% of institutions);
- transfer counselors (86% of institutions);
- course equivalency guides (71% of institutions).

Table 1

Institutional Practices for Academic Programs and Services to Assist Student Transfer to Four-Year Colleges

Practice	Percentage	
	1991 Survey N = 423	1990 Survey N = 538
Academic Programs		
Written Articulation Agreements	90%	85%
Course Equivalency Guides	71	81
Informal Articulation	64	73
Articulated Core Curricula for Transfer Students	56	NA
Two-Year/Four-Year Departmental Collaboration	49	60
Two-Year/Four-Year Faculty Collaboration	36	45
Guaranteed Admissions to Four-Year Institution	36	NA
Joint Degree Programs	24	33
Student Services		
Transfer Counselors/Advisors	86	81
Transfer to Four-Year College Days	70	60
Special Treatment of Transfer in College Catalog	55	57
Transfer Scholarships	45	45
Dual Registration	30	28
Transfer Center	30	NA
Computerized Course Transfer Information Services	23	NA
Specific Intercollege Relations Commissions	16	NA

Other strategies cited in the 1991 survey to help students transfer included:

- articulated core curriculum for transfer students (56% of institutions);
- guaranteed admissions to 4-year institutions (36% of institutions);
- transfer centers (30% of institutions);
- computerized course transfer information service (23% of institutions).

Some caveats are needed here. The 1990 and 1991 surveys did not ask identical questions about transfer practices. Two-year schools that responded in 1991

may be different from the schools that responded in 1990. Comparison of the two surveys does not yield a "trend" in transfer practices.

Responses from the Four-Year Institutions

This is the first year that the Transfer Center surveyed four-year institutions. In general, four-year institutions relied on fewer academic and student service practices to support the transfer process than their two-year counterparts. On average, the four-year institutions checked off slightly more than one-third of the transfer practices listed in the survey while the two-year colleges checked off one-half of them. The two main practices employed by four-year institutions were:

- transfer counselors/advisors (81% of institutions);
- written articulation agreements (69% of institutions).

Table 2

Institutional Practices for Academic Programs and Services to Assist Student Transfer: Responses by Four-Year Institutions

Practice	Percentage Four-Year N = 630
Academic Programs	
Written Articulation Agreements	69%
Course Equivalency Guides	54
Informal Articulation	51
Articulated Core Curricula for Transfer Students	38
Two-Year/Four-Year Departmental Collaboration	30
Two-Year/Four-Year Faculty Collaboration	18
Guaranteed Admissions to Four-Year Institution	19
Joint Degree Programs	16
Guaranteed Admission to Department	9
Student Services	
Transfer Counselors/Advisors	81
Transfer to Four-Year College Days	40
Special Treatment of Transfer in College Catalog	57
Transfer Scholarships	44
Dual Registration	22
Computerized Course Transfer Information Services	15
Specific Intercollege Relations Commissions	15
Transfer Student Organizations	9

Faculty-led practices to facilitate transfer were not reported at many of the four-year institutions. Comparing the two types of institutions, four-year institutions were far less likely to involve faculty in academic practices identified below than were the two-year colleges:

- two-year/four-year departmental collaboration (49% and 30% respectively);
- two-year/four-year faculty collaboration (36% and 18%);
- joint degree programs (24% and 16%).

Gathering Information About Transfer

The research agendas differ for the two- and four-year institutions. Two-year institutions are concerned about what happened to students when they left the college. Four-year institutions are concerned about the number of former community college students presently enrolled on its campus as well as student performance.

Table 3

College Practices for Gathering Information
About Students Who Transfer to Four-Year Colleges

Practice	Percentage
Responses by Two-Year Colleges	
Follow-up Surveys of Graduates	72%
Feedback from Receiving Institutions	70
Reports from In-State Four-Year Institutions	56
State Reporting System	39
Number of Transcript Requests	38
Data from Registrar and Other Offices	32
Computerized Longitudinal Tracking System	16
Other	2
No Activities Reported	3
Responses by Four-Year Institutions	
Data from Registrar and Other Offices	73%
Number of Transcripts Received	50
State Reporting System	27
Feedback from Feeder Institutions	26
Reports from In-State Two-Year Institutions	13
Other	12
No Activities Reported	6

The two-year college has a much more complex research task because they must rely on external resources for learning about students who have left the institution. It is further complicated when students from one community college typically go to a number of different transfer institutions. In addition, many "stop-out" for some time before continuing their education, and a large number transfer before completing the associate degree.

Two-year colleges employ a variety of direct and indirect approaches to obtain information about their former students. The most frequently-used approaches by

two-year colleges for learning about their former students included:

- survey of graduates (72% of institutions);
- feedback from receiving institutions (70% of institutions);
- reports from in-state, four-year institutions (56% of institutions).

The four-year institutions in this study typically used the following two approaches to obtain information about transfer students:

- data from the Registrar and other offices (73% of institutions);
- number of transcripts received (50% of institutions).

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Student support services and articulation agreements may assist in the initial stages of transfer. In the long run, however, faculty-led efforts to strengthen curriculum and teaching for transfer students are critical to transfer success and receipt of the baccalaureate.

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